

ABERSYCHAN LOCAL BOARD.

Medical Officer's Annual Report for 1893.

Abersychan, Feb. 20, 1894.

Gentlemen.—I beg to lay before you the statistical tables required by the Local Government Board, and to review in detail the health of your district for the year 1893.

The Weather.—The weather for the year 1893 was remarkable for the lack of rain in the spring and summer months. The rainfall for the year was 44·75 inches, and was distributed in the following manner: January, 4·15; February, 8·45; March, 0·45; April, 0·28 (the lowest for many years); May, 3·47; June, 1·39; July, 5·37; August, 4·12; September, 2·25; October, 4·31; November, 2·70; and December, 7·59. The greatest rainfall in 24 hours was 2·66, on July 11th.

Population.—I estimate the population of the district as 15,548 at the middle of the year, as compared with 15,296 for 1891 (the census year).

Rates.—The birth rate was 41·6, and the death rate 18·5 per 1,000. The zymotic rate was 1·5, and the rate for phthisis was 0·8.

In the following table you will see the deaths at the different ages, compared with the previous year:—

1893	1892
83	88 under year.
35	71 under 5 years
18	18 under 15 years.
21	7 under 25 years.
82	83 under 65 years.
49	46 65 and upwards.

The rates for the year under review will compare favourably with previous years, and, considering the many insanitary factors at work, remarkable. We have had practically scarlet fever, measles, and influenza present the entire year, and hooping cough during the latter months.

The infantile mortality continues to decrease, but is still too high. However, there is a move in the right direction by the improvement in the class of houses erected and in course of erection, and the attention that has been given to the improvement of ventilation.

Typhoid Fever.—There were eight cases of this disease during the year. The first case occurred in Hill-street, Pontnewynydd, March 11th (this was imported); the next was in Lewis-street, Abersychan, March 21st (defective drain); the next was in George-street, Pontnewynydd, August 25th (no cause discovered); and another on September 15th in St. Luke's-road (imported from Bath); on the following day one in Bailey-street, Garndiffaith, with defective surroundings; and on Sept. 19th another in High-street, Garndiffaith, from a like cause; and November 30th a fatal case in Chapel-lane, Garn; Dec. 1st, another fatal case on the Osborne-road. These cases were all wide apart, and had no connection with each other, and in no case was there any spread, prompt measures being taken.

Scarlet Fever.—We began the year with an epidemic of scarlet fever, chiefly on the Varteg, and I advised the closure of the schools with manifest advantage as regards abatement. There were 43 cases in January, 26 in February, 19 in March, 22 in April, 19 in May, 10 in June, 8 in July, 5 in August, 5 in September, 1 in October, 2 in November, and 2 in December. In all there were 162 cases, and 10 deaths. The disease was of a mild type.

Measles.—There were 36 cases of measles that came under my notice, but this by no means represents the number in your district, as the disease is not notified, and I have reason to believe that three if not four times the number I have given would be nearer the amount. There were two deaths.

German Measles.—Of this disease there were 16 cases—no deaths.

Influenza.—This disease was present in nearly every month of the year. I have no means of knowing the exact number, and can only approximately form an opinion from those occurring in my own practice. On three separate occasions it almost assumed the proportions of an epidemic. On one occasion the chief complication was an intestinal catarrh, and the other chest affections were the complications.

Hooping Cough.—There were seven deaths from this disease. It began in the autumn as an epidemic, but there were occasional cases cropping up throughout the summer.

Diphtheria.—There were six cases of this disease with three deaths. This disease has been very general throughout the country, and was very prevalent in London, with a high death rate; and we have every reason to congratulate ourselves upon our comparative immunity. Each case as it occurred was dealt with by your officers, and in no instance was there any extension.

Phthisis.—The rate from this disease is practically the same as last year. It is certainly a point lower, but then the season was milder. Here again I look for an improvement in the future, as the dwellings improve.

Diarrhoea and Dysentery.—To this class of disease are attributable eleven deaths, eight in infants, and I can congratulate the Board upon the fact of the improvement effected within the last twenty years, and believe it to be the result of increased knowledge as regards the feeding of infants on the part of the mothers.

Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy.—These diseases account for 80 deaths—23 under five years and 57 five and upwards—and call for no special remark in an industrial community like this, except to point the moral of the increased care required in the workers of mines in coming to the colder air above ground.

Heart Disease.—There were 21 deaths from heart disease—a larger number than usual—and not easy to account for. Doubtless in part due to the arduous occupation of mining, but to my mind chiefly in consequence of the frequency of rheumatic affections in the district. I have now I think gone over the salient points arising out of the statistical tables.

Food Supply.—No action taken; presumed to be good. On this point I may mention the County Council intend to have frequent analyses made by a competent chemist, to be appointed.

Slaughter-houses.—These have been visited regularly, and were found clean and in order.

Scavenging.—This has been well looked after, and, during the summer especially, all foul accumulations promptly removed.

I am indebted to your Inspector for the summary of the work done during the year, and which I append:—

Foul closets and cesspits cleansed.....	65
Choked drains opened and cleansed.....	40
New water-closets built to serve old property	19
New closet pans and traps provided and fixed.....	44
Offensive accumulations removed.....	21
Old stone drains taken up and properly jointed, pipe drains substituted	19
Untrapped slop drains furnished with traps	18
Houses provided with water supply.....	15
Slop-water drains laid	11
Pigs removed which were kept contrary to bye-laws	6
Privies converted to water-closets by connecting to sewer	6
Occupiers of overcrowded cottages dispersed	3
Slop stones which were connected to the house drains, disconnected, and made to empty over gully traps	3
Internal w.c.'s, which were found to be defective, provided with washdown pans and flushing tanks, the drains in each case being furnished with intercepting traps and ventilating shafts	4
Nuisances caused by damp walls arising from defective roughing, soil against back wall, etc., complained of and abated.....	5
Notices served for abatement of nuisances.....	238
Nuisances abated by verbal request.....	307
Notices uncomplied with.....	29

WATER SUPPLY.

The Water Company have pushed forward the work which they were to accomplish, and I believe they will be in a position to supply the higher portions of the district (previously unsupplied and dependent upon wells) with a good supply of excellent water. The service reservoir at Varteg has been completed, I believe, and the pipes connected; so that it only remains to finish the pumping arrangements at Cwmavon to enable the whole of the district requiring it to be supplied by gravitation, and I hope to see this effected before the summer. For their action in promoting this the Board are to be commended, and I am sure the inhabitants will be grateful.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

Same as last year. On this subject the Board sent out a committee of inquiry to report upon various systems in use, and generally to advise as to what should be done in this district to complete the drainage scheme and to prevent the pollution of the river; and I heartily endorse the conclusions they have arrived at, and would respectfully urge the Board to proceed with the work. The idea of treating the sewage as it falls into the river at various points by a chemical process and allowing a harmless effluent to escape into the river is one that commends itself to my mind as being effective, highly beneficial, and at the same time cheap.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

I would recommend the adoption of the Infectious Disease Notification Act, to include measles; the erection of an infectious disease hospital; the completion of the drainage.

In conclusion, I would congratulate the Board upon the lessened general death rate, the lessened infantile mortality, the low zymotic rate, the improved house accommodation, all of which afford tangible proof of the improved sanitary condition of your district.

Your obedient servant,
J. W. MULLIGAN, M.D.,
Medical Officer of Health.

